

HAND OF FATE

THE HAND OF FATE

FATE

No. 25

JUNE
10c





WEB COMIC
UNIVERSE.COM

INTRODUCING Comfo-Gard

**THE AMAZING NEW MENSTRUAL SHIELD THAT GIVES
SURE, SAFE PROTECTION DIFFERENTLY**

Yes, here it is—look at the illustration and see at once why Comfo-Gard is different. Comfo-Gard looks like and is an abbreviated pantie—except Comfo-Gard is especially cut to hug the body contours. Comfo-Gard is made of finest fabric and elastic materials and is lined with sheerest, softest rubber to make it liquid repellent.

NO PINS — NO HOOKS

Comfo-Gard eliminates pins and hooks. "No-slip" loops hold the napekin securely without pins or hooks. You'll enjoy this extra freedom from annoyances.

ELIMINATES CHAFING

Comfo-Gard's wide crotch keeps the pad flat and smooth all the time. The elastic band hugs the hips, thus eliminating one of the most common causes of chafing.

NO TELL-TALE BUMPS

Comfo-Gard's special form-fit design completely does away with tell-tale bumps.

NO STAINS — NO OVERFLOW

The special sheer soft rubber lining makes soiling or overflowing impossible. For the first time you'll really feel safe.

LONG LIFE — WASHES IN A JIFFY

Comfo-Gard will give years of good service. Washes in a jiffy and dries almost instantly. Try Comfo-Gards today.

TRY COMFO-GARDS

**60 DAYS FREE . . .
SEND NO MONEY**

Here is our offer:—fill out the coupon below and mail in the postage-free envelope. We'll rush Comfo-Gards to you in an unmarked package. Take 60 days to decide whether you wish to keep Comfo-Gards. If not a full refund of the purchase price will be made immediately.

**60 DAY
TRIAL
COUPON**

**SEND
NO
MONEY**



**2 FOR
\$1.98**

MALEN MFG. CO. Dept. A12
20 Greene St.
New York, N. Y.

Please rush two (2) Comfo-Gards in a plain package. I will pay postman only \$1.98 plus postage. If not satisfied after 60 days I may return the Comfo-Gards for a full refund of the purchase price.

My waist size is.....

Name.....

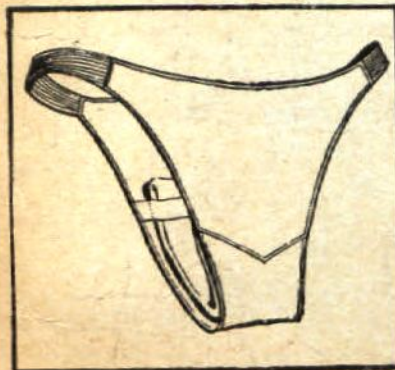
Address.....

City.....Zone.....State.....

☐ Check here if you enclose \$1.98 and we pay postage. Same refund offer holds.

USE COMFO-GARDS AS PANTIES OTHER TIMES

Only Comfo-Gards can be worn as panties during the rest of the time. Just remove the pad and Comfo-Gards become comfortable abbreviated panties. They are wonderful under slacks, sport shirts and beach wear.



OF ALL THE PROFESSIONS IN THE WORLD, ALBERT TORRANCE... YOURS IS THE LOWEST, THE MOST DESPICABLE OF ALL! TO BE A GRAVE-ROBBER, A MAN MUST BE WITHOUT CONSCIENCE, WITHOUT MORALS, WITHOUT DECENCY! THAT DESCRIPTION FITS YOU PERFECTLY, DOESN'T IT, ALBERT? BECAUSE YOU ARE A SCAVENGER OF THE DEAD... A GHOUL OF THE GRAVEYARDS! YOU ARE.

HE WHO ROBS *the* DEAD

YEAH... SURE I ROB THE DEAD! WHY NOT? THEY AIN'T GOT NO USE FOR THE LI'L TRINKETS I TAKE OFF 'EM! BUT I HAVE... AN' THE DEAD ARE GONNA MAKE ME RICH SOME DAY—SO RICH I WON'T EVEN LOOK AT JUNK LIKE GOLD AND DIAMONDS!



YOU HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE DEAD, DO YOU, ALBERT? YOU THINK ONLY OF ONE THING AS YOUR CALLOUSED HANDS CLAW AT THE LID OF THE CASKET YOU HAVE DUG UP

MAYBE THIS IS THE BIG STRIKE! MAYBE THIS COFFIN IS LOADED WITH FAMILY JEWELS!



AT LAST IT'S OPEN! HOLLOW EYES STARE AT YOU OUT OF A BLEACHED SKULL AS IF SHOCKED AT YOUR BLASPHEMY OF THE DEAD...

BLAST THE ROTTEN LUCK! NO LOOT IN THIS BOX! NOTHIN' BUT THE GOLD FILLIN' IN THE SKELETON'S TEETH!



SURE YOU TAKE THE GOLD FILLINGS OUT OF THE SKULL'S JAWS, ALBERT? AFTER ALL, YOU'VE GOT A REPUTATION TO LIVE UP TO... NO CONSCIENCE, NO MORALS, NO DECENCY, HEH, ALBERT?

YEAH... AN' NO DOUGH! I'LL NEVER MAKE MY PILE IF ALL THE STIFFS I DIG UP HAVE AS LI'L AS THIS ONE HAD! IT DON'T EVEN PAY FOR MY DIGGIN' AN' COVERIN' UP TIME!



I BETTER GET BACK TO MY SHACK NOW! THE SUN'S STARTIN' TO COME UP... AN' I DON'T WANNA GET CAUGHT AROUND HERE.

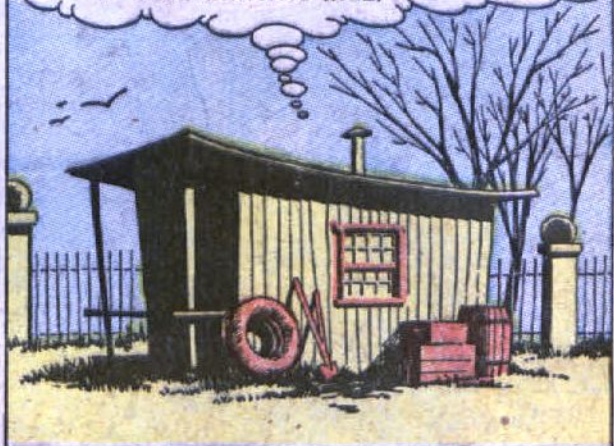


AFTER A HARD NIGHT'S WORK YOU LIKE TO RELAX IN YOUR SHACK, DON'T YOU, ALBERT? AND YOU RELAX BY DROOLING OVER YOUR TREASURES FROM THE TOMBS...

BRACELETS, STICKPINS, RINGS GOLD COINS... YEAH, IT ALL MAKES A NICE PILE.



BUT IT AIN'T ENOUGH... NOT FOR TEN YEARS OF DIGGIN' IT AIN'T! I WANNA STRIKE IT RICH BEFORE I RETIRE... A CASKET LOADED WITH FAMILY JEWELS! AND I WILL, ONE OF THESE NIGHTS... I WILL!



ANOTHER NIGHT... ANOTHER GRAVE, HUH, ALBERT? YOUR SPADE STABS INTO THE SOFT CEMETERY SOIL AND WITH EVERY SHOVELFUL YOU TRY TO IMAGINE WHAT TREASURE LIES BURIED IN THE CASKET BELOW...

COULD BE ONE OF THOSE CRAZY OL' DAMES WHO WANTED TO BE BURIED WITH ALL HER JEWELRY!



YOUR THOUGHTS ARE MENTAL SHOTS OF MORPHINE AND THEY FORCE YOU TO DIG WITH A FRENZY SPAWNED ONLY OF GREED...

AH-H! I'VE HIT THE CASKET! THIS MUST'A BEEN A FRESH GRAVE AN' THE DIGGIN' WAS EASY!



BUT SUDDENLY SOMETHING UNUSUAL HAPPENS, DOESN'T IT, ALBERT? VERY UNUSUAL...

HELP! THE CASKET AN' THE GRAVE CAVED IN! I—I'M FALLING... H—E—L—P!



YES, ALBERT... YOU'RE FALLING, TWISTING, SPINNING... DOWN... DOWN... DOWN! BUT ALL YOUR YELLING AND PLEADING WON'T HELP YOU / DOWN... DOWN, YOU GO, ALBERT...

OKAY, YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES NOW, ALBERT... AND CUT OUT THAT SCREAMING! YOU'VE STOPPED FALLING...

YEAH! I-I HAVE! BUT WHERE AM I? AN' WHO ARE THESE CHARACTERS WALKING AROUND HERE?

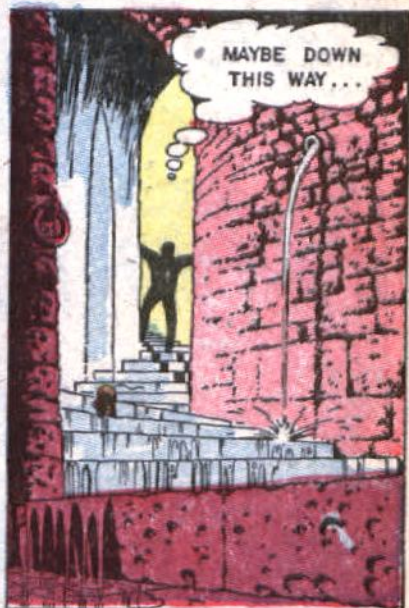


YOU'RE PUZZLED AND FRIGHTENED, AREN'T YOU, ALBERT? BUT WHY? THEY AREN'T BOTHERING YOU... THEY'RE NOT EVEN LOOKING AT YOU... SO WHY BE SCARED?

I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS SLIMY PLACE IS... BUT I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE. THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT!



MAYBE DOWN THIS WAY...



HOLY SMOKES! NO... NO! THEY CAN'T BE REAL... THEY CAN'T!



YOUR EYES BULGE... YOUR TEMPLES THROB AT THE SIGHT / GREED AND DESIRE REPLACE YOUR FEAR / THIS IS IT, HUH, ALBERT? THIS IS THE RICH STRIKE YOU'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF...

CA-RIPES / JEWELS OF ALL KINDS...! RINGS, BRACELETS, NECKLACES / YEAH / THIS IS IT ALL RIGHT / MY RICH STRIKE AT LAST!



**GREED DROPS YOU TO YOUR KNEES!
YOU GRAB AND CLAW AT THE GEMS...
YOU LET THE COOL GOLD METAL AND
SPARKLING STONES RUN THRU YOUR
FINGERS...**

**IT'S REAL! REAL GOLD, DIAMONDS AND
EMERALDS! AN' IT'S ALL LAYIN' AROUND
HERE LIKE TRASH! THEM CREEPS MUST
BE CRAZY... THEY DON'T SEEM TO CARE
ABOUT THIS STUFF AT ALL.**

**HEY, YOU!
CAN I HAVE
A FEW OF
THESE?**

**TAKE ALL YOU
DESIRE! WE
HAVE NO USE
FOR THEM.**

**HE DOESN'T HAVE TO TELL YOU TWICE,
HUH, ALBERT? YOU STUFF YOUR
POCKETS WITH SO MUCH OF THAT LOOT
YOU CAN HARDLY MOVE...**

**NOW I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE... AN'
THEM CHARACTERS OUGHTTA KNOW
HOW TO BLOW THIS JOINT. I'LL ASK
ONE OF 'EM!**

**YES, THERE IS A WAY
OUT... THE SAME WAY
YOU CAME IN!**

**YOU MEAN I GOTTA CLIMB
UP THAT SLIMY HOLE I
FELL THRU?**

**GRAVES ARE THE ONLY
ENTRANCES... AND THE ONLY
EXITS! BUT WHY LEAVE?
YOU'LL BE BACK... EVERY-
ONE COMES HERE...
SOONER OR LATER!**

**NOT THIS BABY! ONCE
I SCRAM OUTTA HERE
I'M STAYIN' OUT. AN'
NOTHIN' CAN MAKE ME
COME BACK!**

**IT'S A LONG WAY UP FROM
THE BOTTOM, ISN'T IT,
ALBERT? BUT YOU DIG YOUR
FINGERS INTO THE SLIMY
WALLS AND START...**

**YOU SLIP AND SLIDE...
BUT YOU CLING TO THE
MUDDY SIDES LIKE A
LIZARD...**

**EVERY PORE BLEEDS
WITH SWEAT... EVERY INCH
OF PROGRESS IS TORTURE...
BUT YOU WON'T GIVE UP...**

**AND A THOUSAND
AGONIES LATER, YOU SEE
THE NIGHT... THE STARS...**

**I MADE IT!
I'M OUT OF
THE GRAVE!**

WHEN YOU GET BACK TO YOUR SHACK YOU'RE SO EXCITED YOU CAN'T SLEEP, CAN YOU, ALBERT? SO YOU SPEND THE NIGHT COUNTING, SORTING, ADMIRING...

YEAH... AN' AS SOON AS IT GETS LIGHT OUT AN' THE STORES OPEN... I'M GONNA SELL THIS STUFF.

YOU'RE THE FIRST CUSTOMER AT THE JEWEL BROKER... AND AS HE STICKS THE LOUPE INTO HIS EYE AND EXAMINES YOUR JEWELRY YOU SEE A LOOK OF AMAZEMENT AND SHOCK ON HIS PALE FACE...

AMAZINGLY FINE PIECES... ALL OF THESE BRACELETS, RINGS AND NECKLACES. WHERE'D YOU ACQUIRE THEM?

NONE OF YOUR BLASTED BUSINESS! DO YOU WANNA BUY THEM OR DON'T YOU? THERE ARE OTHER BROKERS IN THIS TOWN, YA KNOW.

THAT LAST CRACK OF MINE MADE HIM QUIT STALLIN'... AN' HE GAVE ME A GOOD PRICE FOR 'EM! HA! LOOK AT THE GREEN STUFF! I'M RICH... RICH!

YEP, YOU'RE ALL SET NOW, AREN'T YOU, ALBERT? YOU'RE ROLLING IN DOUGH! NEW CLOTHES, GOOD FOOD, GIRLS... EVERYTHING YOU NEVER HAD! YOU'RE REALLY LIVING NOW...

BUT YOUR NEW LIFE IS ONLY A WEEK OLD WHEN THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR OF YOUR APARTMENT... A KNOCK THAT EXPLODES YOUR LITTLE BUBBLE...

THE POLICE!

THAT'S HIM, LIEUTENANT... THAT'S THE MAN WHO SOLD ME THE JEWELRY.

OKAY, ALBERT TORRANCE... YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

FOR WHAT? IT AIN'T NO CRIME TO SELL JEWELRY!

IT IS WHEN IT'S STOLEN JEWELRY! THAT STUFF YOU SOLD WAS TAKEN FROM THE HOME OF MRS. FLORENCE VAN CLIVE IN A ROBBERY A WEEK AGO!

THAT'S A LIE!
THIS IS A FRAME-
UP! I DIDN'T
STEAL THAT
JEWELRY!

THEN WHERE'D
YOU GET IT...
WIN IT ON A
PINBALL
MACHINE?



GO AHEAD, ALBERT... TELL THEM!
TELL THEM THE TRUTH! THEY'LL
THINK YOU'RE CRAZY... BUT THAT'S
BETTER THAN GOING TO JAIL FOR
ROBBERY...

I... I GOT IT FROM
A BUNCH OF
CREEPY CHARAC-
TERS WHO LIVE
AT THE BOTTOM
OF A GRAVE!

HUH? HEY, YOU
MUST BE NUTS
EXPECTIN' US
TO BELIEVE A
WEIRDIE LIKE
THAT!



IT'S THE TRUTH, I TELL
YA! AN' I CAN PROVE IT!
I'LL TAKE YOU RIGHT TO
THE SPOT WHERE I GOT
THE STUFF!

OKAY, LET'S
GO... THIS
I'VE GOT TO
SEE.



THE POLICE SIRENS SCREAM LIKE BANSHEES
AS THEY SPEED YOU TO THE CEMETERY! AND
WHEN YOU GET THERE, YOU RUN TOWARD THE
PLACE WHERE YOU DUG THAT NIGHT...

THAT'S IT... RIGHT THERE! THAT'S
WHERE I GOT THE JEWELRY FROM AND...
HOLY SMOKES! NO... NO!



YES, ALBERT... MRS. VAN
CLIVE'S GRAVE! THE WOMAN
YOU KILLED WHEN YOU PULLED
THE ROBBERY! AND THIS
JEWELRY IS PROOF
POSITIVE!



YOU BEG AND YOU PLEAD... BUT IT'S A WASTE OF
BREATH, ALBERT! THE TOMBSTONES ARE STACKED
AGAINST YOU, BUT THERE'S STILL A CHANCE... A
LAST CHANCE! MAYBE THE JURY AT YOUR TRIAL WILL
BELIEVE YOUR FANTASTIC STORY...

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY...
HAVE YOU REACHED A VERDICT?

WE... HAVE,
YOUR HONOR.



WE, THE JURY, FIND
ALBERT TORRANCE,
GUILTY OF MURDER
AS CHARGED!

NO... NO! I DIDN'T
KILL HER! I DIDN'T!
I GOT THE JEWELRY
FROM THE GRAVE I
TELL YA... FROM
THE GRAVE!



THAT MONTH IN THE DEATH HOUSE WAS MURDER, WASN'T IT, ALBERT? YOU'RE ALMOST GLAD TO BE WALKING THE LAST MILE...

YOU KEEP SAYING THAT ALL THE WAY TO THE CHAIR... AND EVEN AS THEY STRAP AND CAP YOU...

YOU SAY IT FOR THE LAST TIME AS A SWITCH IS PULLED AND 4,000 VOLTS OF HADES BURN YOUR INSIDES.

THEN TWO MORE JOLTS, ALBERT... AND YOU'LL NEVER ROB THE DEAD AGAIN...

I GOT IT FROM THE GRAVE!

I GOT IT FROM THE GRAVE!

I... I GOT IT--- OW-W-W--- FROM THE GRAVE!

THIS IS ONE TIME, ALBERT, THAT SOMEBODY ELSE DUG A GRAVE FOR YOU...

BUT SUDDENLY, YOU'RE NOT IN THE CASKET ANYMORE, ARE YOU ALBERT?

I—I CAN'T BE DEAD! LOOK AT ME... I'M WALKIN'! I'M NOT IN A COFFIN! AN' THIS PLACE... I RECOGNIZE IT! I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!

SURE YOU HAVE, ALBERT! LOOK OVER THERE... REMEMBER THAT PILE OF JEWELRY? REMEMBER HOW YOU HELPED YOURSELF TO ALL YOU COULD CARRY?

AND NOW YOU KNOW WHY YOU AREN'T INTERESTED IN THE GOLD AND DIAMONDS ANYMORE, DON'T YOU ALBERT?

SURE... I REMEMBER! BUT FUNNY... I AIN'T INTERESTED IN THAT STUFF ANYMORE.

THAT IS WHERE THE SPIRITS CAST THEIR WORDLY TRINKETS WHEN THEY COME TO THIS LAND BEYOND LIFE!

YEAH... WHAT GOOD ARE GOLD AND DIAMONDS... TO A GHOST!

A Hand of FATE Mystery

#31

THE "AFFAIR OF THE BLACK ROSE" WAS A TRUE CASE OF THE SUPERNATURAL THAT TOOK PLACE IN ENGLAND WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD AND FEUDS COMMON AMONG NOBLE FAMILIES. A LONG-STANDING FEUD HAD JUST COME TO AN END WHEN A CLAN CAPITULATED TO A POWERFUL BLOOD ENEMY. THE DEFEAT ENDED THE REIGN OF THE FAMILY OF THE "BLACK ROSE"

MY TERMS ARE THESE. YOU MUST VACATE THIS CASTLE AND LEAVE ENGLAND. IF NOT, YOU DIE!

I HAVE NO CHOICE. BUT, SIR WILLIAM, THE "BLACK ROSE" WILL AVENGE ME! A REVENGE OF DEATH ON YOUR FAMILY!



SIR WILLIAM BECAME MASTER OF THE "BLACK ROSE" CASTLE, SO NAMED FOR THE PHENOMENAL ROSE THAT GREW ALONG SIDE THE CASTLE WALL.

AA!! THIS DEVILISH PLANT TEARS AT MY CLOTHES! PERHAPS THE CURSE OF THE BLACK ROSE HAS MEANING...



SIR WILLIAM HAD THE GROUNDS COVERED WITH GRAVEL AND THE BLACK ROSE DESTROYED TO PREVENT THE CURSE FROM COMING TRUE. IN TIME THE CURSE WAS FORGOTTEN. BUT CENTURIES LATER, AN ANCESTOR OF SIR WILLIAM BECAME HEIR TO THE CASTLE...

CLEAR THIS GRAVEL AND SEED THE GROUNDS! I WANT GRASS AND FLOWERS TO GROW HERE AGAIN!



SOON THE AREA WAS GREEN EXCEPT FOR A HUGE BLACK ROSE THAT HAD MYSTERIOUSLY BLOOMED...

STRANGE! THIS BLACK ROSE... I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT! ITS THORNS ARE AS SHARP AS BLADES!



THAT NIGHT, SIR WILLIAM'S DESCENDANT WAS AWAKENED BY A HORRIBLE SIGHT COMING THROUGH HIS BEDROOM WINDOW

WHA...? THE BLACK ROSE! IT'S ALIVE! CREEPING TOWARDS ME...! AAAAIIIIII!

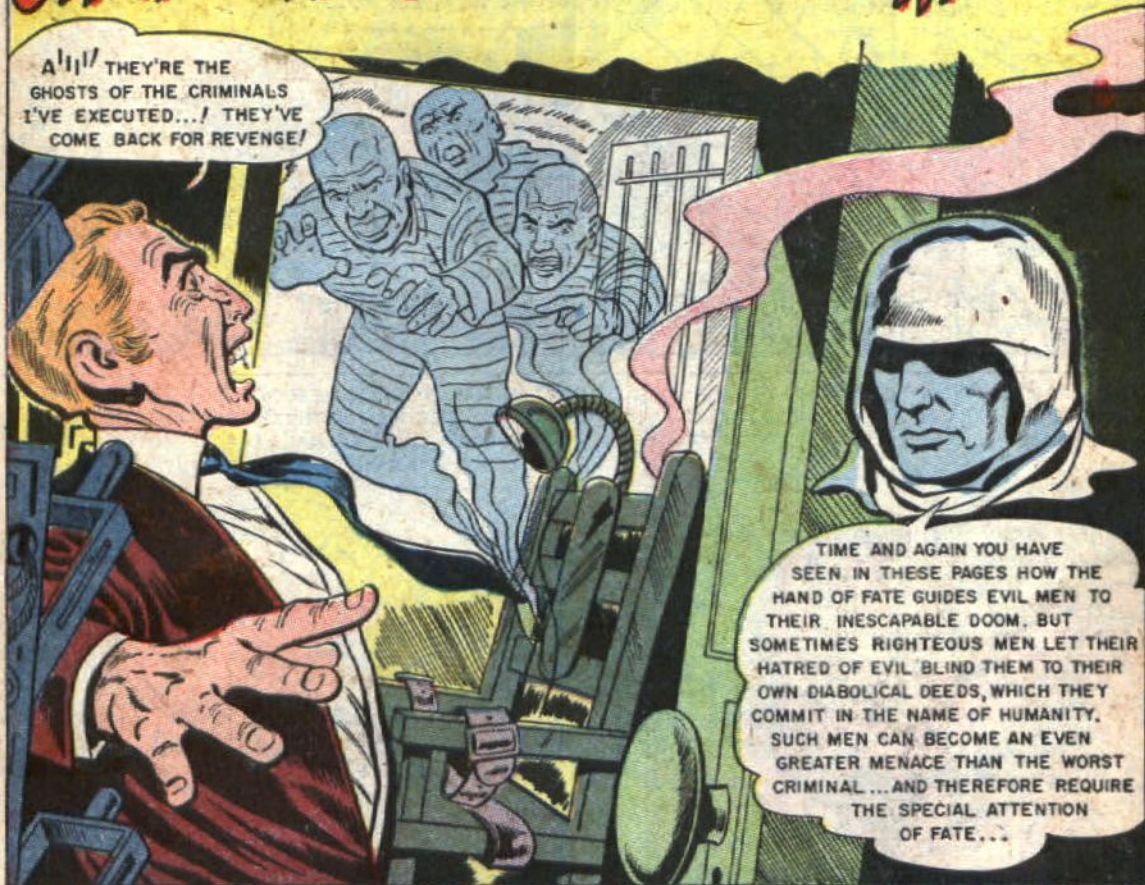


THE SCREAMS BROUGHT SERVANTS TO THE BEDROOM WHERE THEY FOUND THEIR MASTER WITH THE SINEWY TENTACLES OF THE BLACK ROSE WRAPPED AROUND HIM. THE SHARP THORNS HAD PIERCED HIS BODY LIKE A THOUSAND KNIVES! THE ROSE ITSELF HAD BECOME A MASS OF WITHERED PETALS, ITS TASK OF CENTURIES-OLD CURSE COMPLETED.

THE END

SHATTERING THE TIME BARRIER

A'II!! THEY'RE THE
GHOSTS OF THE CRIMINALS
I'VE EXECUTED...! THEY'VE
COME BACK FOR REVENGE!



TIME AND AGAIN YOU HAVE
SEEN IN THESE PAGES HOW THE
HAND OF FATE GUIDES EVIL MEN TO
THEIR INESCAPABLE DOOM. BUT
SOMETIMES RIGHTEOUS MEN LET THEIR
HATRED OF EVIL BLIND THEM TO THEIR
OWN DIABOLICAL DEEDS, WHICH THEY
COMMIT IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY.
SUCH MEN CAN BECOME AN EVEN
GREATER MENACE THAN THE WORST
CRIMINAL...AND THEREFORE REQUIRE
THE SPECIAL ATTENTION
OF FATE...

THE CASE OF PHILIP SPAYNE, EXECUTIONER AT THE
STATE PRISON DEATH HOUSE...



YAAAGHH!

DIE, YOU ROTTEN MURDERER...
DIE! I'M GLAD I'M THE ONE WHO'S
SENDING THE JUICE THROUGH
THAT VICIOUS BRAIN OF YOURS!

AFTER THE ELECTRICITY HAD TAKEN ITS TOLL...

IT TOOK THREE SHOTS TO KILL
THAT MAN! HE MUST HAVE
SUFFERED AGONIES! CAN'T
YOU RAISE THE VOLTAGE,
SPAYNE, SO CONDEMNED MEN
WILL DIE AT THE FIRST SHOCK?

ALL RIGHT, WARDEN!
I'LL WORK ON
THE GENERATOR!

BUT IF I HAD MY WAY,
I'D MAKE 'EM SUFFER
EVEN MORE!



A LOT OF CRIMINALS ARE TOO CUNNING TO BE CAUGHT! WHEN WE CATCH BAD ONES, THEY SHOULD BE TORTURED TO DEATH AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS!

BEHOLD, HOW LITTLE THINGS AFFECT THE DESTINIES OF MEN!



IF PHILIP SPAYNE HAD NOT BEEN SO ABSORBED IN HIS THOUGHTS, HE WOULD NOT HAVE ABSENT-MINDEDLY CONNECTED SOME WIRES IN AN UNUSUAL WAY. . .

BUT I'VE GOT TO FOLLOW THE WARDEN'S ORDERS! WELL, LET'S SEE HOW MUCH I'VE STEPPED UP THE VOLTAGE. . .



WHA---! I MUST'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG! THE CURRENT SHOULDN'T HAVE JUMPED AN ARC LIKE THAT!

CRACKK



I-I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THERE SEEMS TO BE A STRANGE NEW WORLD ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THOSE ARCS! AND GREAT SCOTT...! THERE'S THAT CRIMINAL I ELECTROCUTED AN HOUR AGO---FOLLOWED BY A GANG OF OTHER EXECUTED KILLERS!



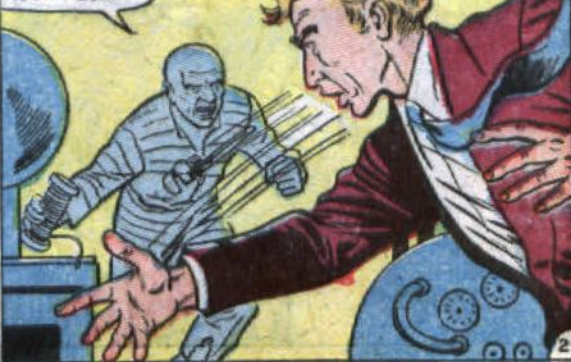
HE--HE'S BECOMING TRANSPARENT... TURNING INTO A GHOST!

YOU ELECTROCUTED ME! NOW I GET MY REVENGE... BY EXECUTING YOU!



YOU'LL NEVER GET ME, YOU FIEND! AAHH! THAT WRENCH WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIS BODY!

NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL STOP ME! BUT THIS LENGTH OF WIRE WILL FINISH YOU... WHEN I WRAP IT AROUND YOUR NECK!





SUDDENLY...

YII! WE'RE BEING DESTROYED!

HAREEE!

THEY—THEY STARTED TO DISINTEGRATE... AS SOON AS I ACCIDENTLY KNOCKED THE SWITCH INTO THE OFF POSITION!

THEY'VE DISAPPEARED! BUT NOW I KNOW HOW TO GET RID OF THEM—BY TURNING THE CURRENT OFF! SO I'LL JUST TURN IT ON AGAIN AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

TAKE HEED, MORTAL! DISCONNECT YOUR WIRING—FORGET THAT ALL THIS EVER HAPPENED!

IT IS DANGEROUS TO DELVE INTO SUCH SECRETS... NOT BECAUSE YOU ARE EVIL, BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE SO FANATICAL ABOUT YOUR OWN IDEAS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!

IF YOU'RE TRYING TO STOP ME, YOU MUST BE A CREATURE OF EVIL! I DON'T TAKE ADVICE FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!

AND SPAYNE THREW THE SWITCH...

AH, THE CURRENT JUMPED THE ARCS AGAIN... BUT THERE'S A BATTLE GOING ON IN THAT WEIRD WORLD NOW!

STAND FAST, BROTHERS! DO NOT LET THE EVIL ONES INVADE THE WORLD OF THE LIVING!

THOSE CRIMINALS SEEM TO BE WINNING... AND I CAN'T STAND BY AND WATCH THAT HAPPEN!

I'VE GOT TO FIGHT EVIL, NO MATTER WHERE IT TAKES PLACE! BUT THOSE HIGH-VOLTAGE ARCS MUSTN'T TOUCH MY BODY, OR I'LL BE ELECTROCUTED INSTANTLY!



AHH! THE EVIL ONES HAVE BROKEN THROUGH OUR LINES!



PHILIP SPAYNE DID NOT STOP TO EXPLORE THE STRANGE WORLD HE FOUND HIMSELF IN. DRIVEN BY HATRED OF ALL THINGS EVIL, HE PICKED UP A CLUB AND RUSHED INTO THE FRAY...

WHAT'S HOLDING YOU GUYS UP? LET'S GET TO THE WORLD OF THE LIVING AND GO ON A RAMPAGE OF MURDER!



THIS GHOSTS STOPPIN' US... AGHH!

A GHOST! RUN FOR LIVES!



HUH? ME—A GHOST?

HOLY JUMP—I-I'M TRANSPARENT.../ I AM GHOSTLIKE!

I CAN EXPLAIN THAT, MY FRIEND...



THIS IS THE WORLD OF THE DEAD! THE LIVING APPEAR AS GHOSTS HERE...JUST AS WE DEAD APPEAR AS SPIRITS IN YOUR WORLD! ORDINARILY, THE TWO WORLDS ARE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS, BUT SOMETHING APPARENTLY HAPPENED TO BRING THE TWO LEVELS INTO ALIGNMENT...



...SO NOW THE LIVING AND THE DEAD CAN ENTER EACH OTHER'S WORLD BY STEPPING BETWEEN THOSE FLAMING ARCS!

I GET IT! I MUST'VE ACCIDENTALLY HOOKED UP MY WIRES IN A NEW WAY, AND THE NEW FORCE FIELD MADE THE TWO WORLDS INTERSECT AT THE ARCS!



BUT TELL ME---
WHAT WAS THAT
BATTLE ABOUT?

WE'RE THE
SPIRITS OF
SETTLERS WHO
DIED HERE BEFORE
THE PRISON WAS
BUILT... AND EVER
SINCE THE EXECUTION
OF CRIMINALS BEGAN
IN THE PRISON, THEIR
SPIRITS HAVE BEEN
ATTACKING US, SLOWLY
WIPING US OUT!



BUT WE'VE KEPT TRYING TO KEEP
THE EVIL ONES OUT OF THE WORLD
OF THE LIVING, BECAUSE THEY'D
BE INVULNERABLE
THERE—JUST AS YOU
ARE BODILESS AND
INVULNERABLE
HERE! NOW YOU
CAN HELP US—

NO, I'VE GOT
A BETTER
IDEA! I'M
GOING BACK TO
MY WORLD...
WITH THOSE
GHOSTLY
CRIMINALS!



NO---STAY
HERE AND
HELP US
DESTROY
THE
CRIMINALS!

DO NOT EMBARK ON
YOUR MAD PLAN,
PHILIP SPAYNE...OR
YOU ARE DOOMED!

OUT OF MY WAY!
NOBODY'S
STOPPING ME!



*PHILIP SPAYNE
COULD NOT BE
REASONED WITH! HE
SEARCHED UNTIL HE
FOUND THE HEAD-
QUARTERS OF THE
CRIMINALS IN THE
WORLD OF THE DEAD...*



DON'T BE AFRAID! I WON'T HARM
YOU—IF YOU DO AS I SAY! COME
BACK TO THE WORLD OF THE
LIVING WITH ME... AND KILL ALL
THOSE THAT SHOULD DIE!

SURE—SURE WE'LL
DO ANYTHING
YOU SAY... BOSS!



IF YOU DON'T OBEY ME, I'LL TURN
OFF THE CURRENT WHILE YOU'RE IN
THE WORLD OF THE LIVING...
AND YOU'LL DISINTEGRATE LIKE
THE GHOSTS WHO TRIED TO KILL
ME BEFORE!

DON'T WORRY, BOSS!
YOU NAME WHO YOU
WANT KILLED! THAT'S
THE KIND OF WORK
WE ENJOY!



SOON AFTERWARDS...

THERE, THERE'S THE NAMES
OF THE WORST RACKETEERS,
CRIMINALS AND DICTATORS IN THE
WORLD... ALL WHO'VE ESCAPED
JUSTICE UNTIL NOW!

OKAY, BOYS, HERE'S A
LIST OF ALL THOSE I
WANT MURDERED!



AND SO THE GHOSTLY HORDE SPREAD THROUGH THE WORLD ON ITS MISSION OF MURDER, OBEYING THE ORDERS OF A FANATIC WHOSE METHODS WERE THOSE OF THE VERY CRIMINALS AND DICTATORS HE WANTED TO DESTROY!



WHA---
YOU
AGAIN!

BEWARE, PHILIP
SPAYNE! YOUR
MOTIVES ARE
GOOD, BUT YOUR
METHODS ARE EVIL!
YOU ARE TAKING HUMAN
LIVES INTO YOUR OWN
HANDS, CONDEMNING
PEOPLE TO DEATH
WITHOUT TRIAL...



... BEWARE
LEST YOU
PERISH
THROUGH
YOUR OWN
POWER-MAD
ARROGANCE!

NO THREATS CAN
SCARE ME! I'M
GOING TO RID THE
WORLD OF EVIL! I'M
GOING BACK NOW
TO THE DEAD FOR
MORE CRIMINALS
TO CARRY OUT
MY ORDERS!



IN THE
WORLD OF
THE DEAD
SPAYNE WAS
TO HAVE
ANOTHER
CHANCE TO
SAVE HIMSELF
BY HEEDING
THE CALL OF
HIS HEART...

OH, HOW I'VE BEEN WAITING
FOR YOU TO COME BACK! STAY
HERE AND HELP US FIGHT THE
EVIL DEAD! I'VE FALLEN IN
LOVE WITH YOU... I PROMISE
TO MAKE YOU HAPPY!

YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL...
BUT I CAN'T LET
LOVE INTERFERE
WITH MY MISSION!



SPAYNE
THEN
TOLD
THE
GIRL
HOW HE
WAS
FIGHTING
EVIL
IN THE
WORLD
OF THE
LIVING...
AND
SHE
DREW
AWAY
IN
HORROR
...

BUT YOU—YOU'RE SETTING YOURSELF UP AS
PROSECUTOR, JUDGE AND EXECUTIONER OF THE
WHOLE HUMAN RACE! AND THAT'S EVIL! AT
LEAST HERE WE'RE FIGHTING MEN WHO'VE
BEEN LEGALLY CONVICTED AND
EXECUTED FOR THEIR
CRIMES!

YOU'RE
AGAINST ME
TOO! BUT EVEN
THAT WON'T STOP ME!



I MUST
STOP HIM...
AT ANY
COST!

WHEN PHILIP SPAYNE RETURNED WITH A NEW BAND OF GHOSTLY RECRUITS...

HERE'S A LIST OF MORE PEOPLE I WANT KILLED! I'VE RUN OUT OF KNOWN CRIMINALS AND DICTATORS, SO HERE'S A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO MIGHT GO BAD! THE WORLD WILL BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM!

POWER HAS MADE A TYRANT OF HIM!



AFTER THE GHOSTS LEFT ON THEIR MURDEROUS ASSIGNMENTS...

I'LL WIPE OUT ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSE MY PLANS TO IMPROVE THE WORLD!

HOW CAN I STOP HIM? WAIT... I HAVE SEEN HIM STEP CAREFULLY OVER THAT LOWER ARC OF FIRE. WILL IT STUN HIM AND RESTORE HIM TO HIS SENSES IF I PUSH HIM INTO IT?



IN DEATH AS IN LIFE, PHILIP SPAYNE DESTROYED WHATEVER HE TOUCHED... FOR HIS FALL DEMOLISHED THE WIRING HOOKUP THAT HAD LED HIM TO HIS FATE! AND AS THE DOORWAY TO THE WORLD OF THE DEAD VANISHED...



...SO, TOO, VANISHED THE HORDES OF GHOSTLY CRIMINALS IN THE MIDST OF THEIR DEADLY TASKS!



WE'LL NEVER KNOW HOW THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED... WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY RECONSTRUCT IT FROM THAT MASS OF BURNED TWISTED WIRING!

PHILIP SPAYNE, EXECUTIONER... ELECTROCUTED BY HIS OWN HAND! WHAT AN IRONIC FATE!



THE END

A Hand of **FATE** Mystery

#32

IN THE FILES OF THE PARIS POLICE THERE CAN BE FOUND A CASE HISTORY OF A CRIME THAT OCCURRED OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO. TO THIS DAY AN AURA OF THE SUPERNATURAL STILL HANGS OVER IT. IN THE HOME OF A WEALTHY FAMILY, A MASQUERADE BALL WAS IN PROGRESS AS A SPURNED SUITOR OF THE HOSTESS PLOTTED MANIACALLY IN A DARK CORNER. JEAN PILLOT WAS PLANNING MURDER.

JULIA HAS GIVEN ME UP FOR ANOTHER MAN. SHE MUST DIE! MY PLAN IS PERFECT. NO ONE RECOGNIZES ME IN THIS COSTUME AND I AM SUPPOSED TO BE IN ROUEN TONIGHT! FITTING DISGUISE FOR A PERFECT CRIME!



SUDDENLY THE HALL WAS PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS. ABOVE THE STARTLED SHOUTS OF THE GUESTS CAME JULIA'S ANGUISHED SHRIEK! WHEN THE LIGHTS CAME ON AGAIN.



JULIA! SHE'S BEEN STABBED!

SHE'S DEAD!

STOP THAT MAN! HE IS THE KILLER!

PILLOT WAS CAPTURED, BUT WHEN THEY TRIED REMOVE HIS SATANIC MAKEUP.

T-THE HORNS...! THEY WILL NOT COME OFF! THEY'RE REAL!

THESE FEATURES -- ARE HIS! HE IS REALLY SATAN!

WHA...? THIS IS BUT A DISGUISE! I AM JEAN PILLOT!



UNABLE TO REMOVE THE HEINOUS FEATURES FROM HIS FACE, PILLOT BECAME TERROR-STRICKEN. HE RAN MADLY FROM THE HALL AND PLUNGED OUT OF A WINDOW FOUR STORIES OFF THE GROUND.



PILLOT'S BODY LANDED ON A SPIKED FENCE AND HE WAS MORTALLY IMPALED.

THE POLICE -- CALL THE POLICE!



WHEN THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVED THEY WERE ASTONISHED TO FIND THE FIGURE OF THE DEVIL HANGING ON A SPIKE. MEDICAL SCIENCE COULD NOT EXPLAIN THE MACABRE TRANSFORMATION THAT OVERCAME JEAN PILLOT! THE BODY WAS CREMATED AND THE CASE FILED IN THE ANNALS OF THE UNEXPLAINABLE.

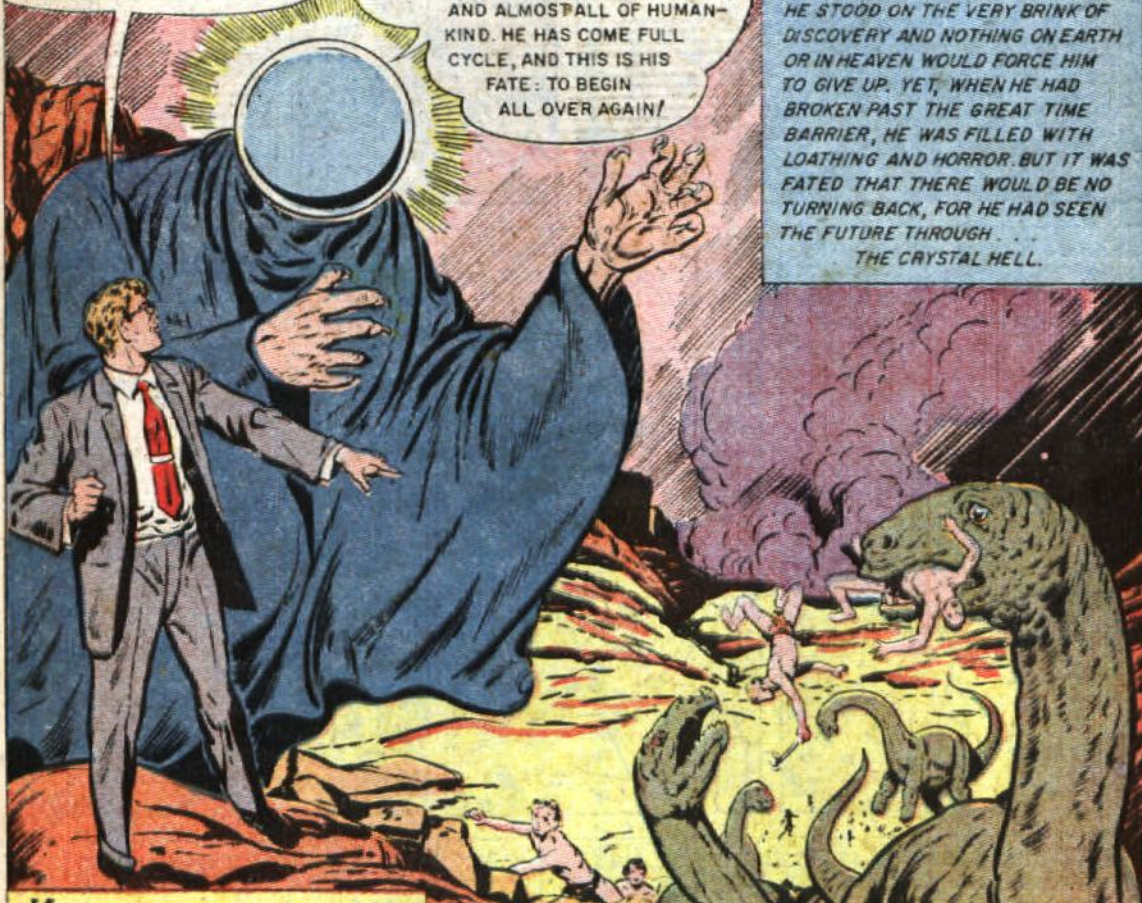
THE END

HELL beyond the Crystal ball

YOU LIED TO ME! THIS ISN'T THE FUTURE! THESE ARE PRIMITIVE TIMES! THOSE ANIMALS, THOSE MEN—THEY BELONG TO THE STONE AGE!

THIS IS THE FUTURE, MAX BRONISLAW! THE FUTURE FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS HENCE! THROUGH HIS OWN STUPIDITY, MAN DESTROYED THE GREAT WORKS HE HAD CREATED, AND ALMOST ALL OF HUMAN-KIND. HE HAS COME FULL CYCLE, AND THIS IS HIS FATE: TO BEGIN ALL OVER AGAIN!

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL MAN HAS TRIED IN VAIN TO PIERCE THE FUTURE. BUT MAX BRONISLAW, WORLD RENOWNED CYBERNETIC GENIUS, WOULD NOT ACCEPT DEFEAT. HE STOOD ON THE VERY BRINK OF DISCOVERY AND NOTHING ON EARTH OR IN HEAVEN WOULD FORCE HIM TO GIVE UP. YET, WHEN HE HAD BROKEN PAST THE GREAT TIME BARRIER, HE WAS FILLED WITH LOATHING AND HORROR. BUT IT WAS FATED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO TURNING BACK, FOR HE HAD SEEN THE FUTURE THROUGH... THE CRYSTAL HELL.



MAX BRONISLAW HAD LONG WRESTLED IN VAIN WITH THE PROBLEM OF PENETRATING THE FUTURE. ONE DAY WHEN HE THOUGHT HE HAD THE PROBLEM OF THE TIME BARRIER LICKED...

THIS IS CERTAINLY THE GREATEST MECHANICAL BRAIN EVER MADE. HOW DO YOU INTEND TO TEST IT?

WITH THIS FORMULA, DR. SIMMONS! WHEN FED INTO THE MACHINE, IT SHOULD GIVE US A PICTURE OF THE WORLD TWO THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW!

DIALS WERE TURNED, SWITCHES THROWN AS THE FORMULA WAS FED INTO THE MACHINE...

MAX, LOOK! THE MACHINE REJECTS YOUR FORMULA! IT CAN'T BE DONE!

NO, GIVE IT A CHANCE! IT NEEDS MORE TIME FOR CALCULATIONS!



BUT THE MECHANICAL BRAIN HAD TRIED ITS UTMOST, AND WHEN PUSHED TO ITS LIMIT...

YOU'VE OVERTAXED IT, MAX, LOOK OUT!

AAARRH,
I'VE FAILED,
FAILED! FIVE
YEARS OF WORK
WASTED ON THIS
STUPID MACHINE.



MAX, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT HAMMER?

I'VE WASTED A WHOLE LIFE-TIME PLAYING WITH TOYS, AND I HAVEN'T ACHIEVED MY DREAM! I HATE EVERY ONE I EVER INVENTED. BEFORE I LEAVE HERE I'LL MAKE JUNK OUT OF THEM!



MAX'S RAGE WAS TOO GREAT TO STOP...

NO, YOU MUSTN'T! NOBODY CAN REBUILD THEM! YOU'RE PUTTING SCIENCE BACK TWENTY YEARS!

THAT'S NOT MY CONCERN! SCIENCE WILL GET ALONG WITHOUT THEM! DON'T TRY TO STOP ME!



NOT UNTIL EVERY MACHINE HAD BEEN DESTROYED DID MAX LEAVE THE LABORATORY FOR HIS HOME...

HOW STUPID I WAS TO ATTEMPT THE IMPOSSIBLE! TO GLIMPSE THE FUTURE THROUGH A FORMULA. YET THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY—NOT THROUGH AN EQUATION FIT ONLY FOR THE FIRE!



SUDDENLY AS FLAMES CAUGHT THE PAPER

WHA...? THE FLAMES ARE SHOOTING RIGHT OUT OF THE FIREPLACE! THE WHOLE ROOM WILL CATCH FIRE!



BUT MAX WAS EVEN MORE STARTLED BY THE FLAMES' TRANSFORMATION.

WHO—WHAT ARE YOU?

HAVE NO FEAR, MAX BRONISLAW! YES, YOU ARE WELL KNOWN TO ME! IT WAS YOUR FORMULA WHICH SUMMONED NATAS FROM THE WORLD OF THE FLAMES TO PUT HIM COMPLETELY IN YOUR POWER! YOU MAY HAVE ANY WISH YOU WANT.



YOU CERTAINLY LOOK LIKE AN UNEARTHLY CREATURE! TELL ME, ARE THERE NO RESTRICTIONS? CAN I HAVE ANY WISH I WANT? IS THERE ANYTHING I MUST DO FOR YOU?

NOTHING! I AM HERE TO SERVE YOU, PROVIDED WHAT YOU CHOSE BRINGS FULFILLMENT. IF YOU DON'T ACHIEVE HAPPINESS, WELL... THEN I'M RELEASED AND YOU MUST DO AS I SAY! DON'T RUSH! THINK IT OVER!



A SILENT WITNESS ASSESSED THE MORTAL DANGER BUT COULD NEITHER WARN NOR COUNSEL...

I CAN'T LOSE! MY GREATEST HAPPINESS LIES IN THE FUTURE! IF NATAS GRANTS MY WISH, I'LL NEVER REGRET IT! YES, YES I'LL DO IT!

THINK, MAX BRONISLAW! NO MAN HAS BEEN AFFORDED SIGHT OF THE FUTURE! THERE ARE GOOD REASONS FOR THIS!



I HAVE DECIDED, NATAS, AND ACCEPT THE TERMS OF YOUR BARGAIN. I WANT TO SEE THE FUTURE... YES, THE PERFECT BEAUTY OF THE FUTURE!

VERY WELL, THEN. THE BARGAIN MUST BE SEALED IN BLOOD. HOLD UP YOUR ARM! COME CLOSER! THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE AWAITS YOU!



NOW THERE IS NO TURNING BACK! TO PEER INTO WHAT IS NOT PERMITTED ANY MORTAL, IS TO INVITE DISASTER!

NOW STARE INTO THE CRYSTAL! CONCENTRATE... AND SOON THE FUTURE YOU HAVE CHOSEN WILL MATERIALIZE!

MY HEAD! I'M BEGINNING TO GET DIZZY! THE CRYSTAL IS GETTING LARGER AND LARGER!



THROUGH THE ENVELOPING MIST MAX SAW THE MURKY OUTLINES OF A NEW WORLD...

WHERE AM I? IF ONLY THIS HAZE WOULD CLEAR! AAAH... NOW I CAN SEE! JUST AHEAD! IT IS A FUTURE WORLD!



HE CAME TO FULL CONSCIOUSNESS AMID CHEERS AND DAZZLING BEAUTY...

MAX BRONISLAW, AS MATHEMATICAL GENIUS OF THE FIRST ORDER, YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO JUDGE THIS CONTEST OF THE BEAUTIES OF THE UNIVERSE. AS REWARD FOR YOUR GREAT WORK, THE ONE YOU CHOOSE SHALL BECOME YOUR WIFE.

I CAN SEE THAT A DECISION WILL BE DIFFICULT!



AFTER LONG STUDY, MEASUREMENT AND CONTEMPLATION...

THIS ONE STANDS OUT IN ALL RESPECTS! I CHOOSE HER, FOR SHE EXEMPLIFIES PERFECT BEAUTY!

YOU HAVE MADE AN EXCELLENT CHOICE! AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR CUSTOM WE SHALL HOLD A PUBLIC CEREMONY!



SO MAX WAS MARRIED IN THE YEAR 3310 TO THE PERFECT BEAUTY, MISS UNIVERSE.

SO BY THE POWERS OF THE WORLD STATE INVESTED IN ME, I PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE!

RAY!
HURRAH!
HURRAH!



SEVERAL DAYS LATER, MAX BEGAN TO LEARN THAT BEAUTY WAS ONLY SKIN DEEP . . .

WHAT KIND OF MEAL IS THIS? EVERYTHING IS BURNED AND TASTELESS! HAVEN'T YOU EVER LEARNED TO COOK?

NO, DEAR!



DO YOU CALL YOURSELF THE IDEAL WIFE FOR A GREAT SCIENTIST? THERE ISN'T A SINGLE THING I CAN SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT. A WEEK HAS PASSED AND I HAVEN'T GOTTEN A SINGLE THOUGHT OUT OF THAT BIRD BRAIN OF YOURS!

YES, DEAR!



YES, DEAR! NO, DEAR! YES, DEAR! I'LL GO MAD! I'LL THROTTLE YOU IF I HEAR IT ONCE MORE! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, ISN'T THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN SAY?

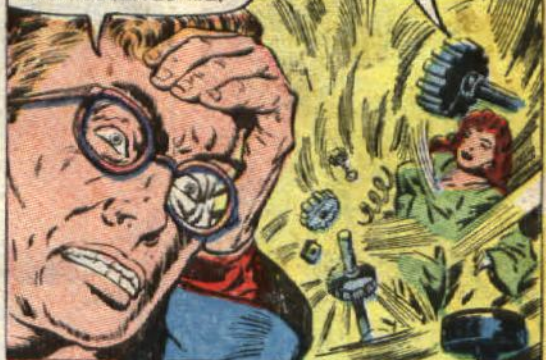
NO, DEAR!



IN MADDENED FURY, MAX FLUNG HIS THING OF BEAUTY TO THE GROUND WITH VIOLENT FORCE . . .

AARRRH! IT ISN'T A WOMAN I MARRIED, BUT A THING, A ROBOT! NO, NO, THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANTED! NATAS DECEIVED ME!

YES, DEAR! NO, DEAR! YES, DEAR! NO, DEAR! YES, DEAR!



AND AS THE WORDS OF DISCONTENT AND BITTERNESS LEFT HIS LIPS . . .

NATAS! YOU TRICKED ME...! IT WAS A HOAX, A MIRAGE!

NO, YOU DECEIVED YOURSELF! YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT PERFECTION DOES NOT EXIST IN NATURE! PERFECT BEAUTY IS MAN-MADE!



YOU NOW HAVE TWO CHOICES LEFT IN THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE! WHAT SHALL IT BE, BRONISLAW? OR ARE YOU ALREADY RESIGNED TO DEFEAT?

DEFEAT, NO! I MADE A WRONG CHOICE. THE FUTURE WILL TRAFFIC IN POWER! YES, GIVE ME A POSITION OF GREAT POWER IN THE WORLD OF TOMORROW!

A CHOICE AS STUPID AS THE FIRST ONE! THE CARDS OF THE EVIL ONE ARE MARKED, AND ONLY HE CAN WIN!



AGAIN THE CENTURIES SPED BY IN A SWIRLING MIST AND AS THE HAZE SLOWLY CLEARED

YOUR WISH IS GRANTED! COMMANDER BRONISLAW, YOU ARE IN GARRISON B, ON GUAM, DEFENSE CENTER OF THE PACIFIC. THE YEAR IS 5731.



THOSE BOMBS ARE GETTING TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT! EVEN TWO HUNDRED FEET UNDER ROCK IS NO PROTECTION! WHAT'S THE LATEST FROM THE ENEMY?

ENEMY GARRISON A HAS FALLEN, COMMANDER! NO FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS, SIR!

ENEMY GARRISON B AND C ARE DEAD...! NO REPORT, COMMANDER!



AND HOURS LATER...

BOMBS HAVE DESTROYED ALL ENEMY INSTALLATIONS! WE'VE RECEIVED NO ANSWER TO PEACE DEMANDS FROM THEM AND OUR OWN FORCES ARE SILENT! WHAT DOES IT MEAN, SIR!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? YOU IDIOTS... IT MEANS VICTORY, COMPLETE VICTORY, AND WE ALONE HAVE SURVIVED! LOCK THE CONTROL BOARDS. IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!



ONE BY ONE, HIS STAFF TURNED, UNTIL MAX UNDERSTOOD THE NATURE OF HIS HOLLOW VICTORY.

CELEBRATE, SIR? REMEMBER, WE CAN'T LEAVE! THE AIR IS DEADLY WITH RADIATION!

WE ARE THE ONLY ONES LEFT, SIR!

AAAAARRRH...! MECHANISMS NOT MEN! THEN I'M DOOMED TO LIVE OUT MY LIFE WITH MACHINES! I'M CAUGHT LIKE A RAT IN A TRAP! NO, NO! I'D RATHER DIE!



BUT DEATH WOULD NOT COME SO READILY... THERE WAS STILL NATAS TO CONSIDER...

WILL THE FUTURE ALWAYS BE MECHANISTIC AND DESTRUCTIVE? IS THERE NO DISTANT AGE WHERE I CAN FIND HAPPINESS?

YOU STILL HAVE ANOTHER CHOICE, BRONISLAW! PERHAPS THE LAST ONE WILL FULFILL ALL YOUR DESIRES!



THEN TRANSPORT ME TO AN AGE WHERE ALL WARS HAVE CEASED AND MAN HAS GROWN SIMPLE AGAIN. AN ERA OF PEACE!

IT SHALL BE DONE. GAZE WITHOUT FEAR INTO THE CRYSTAL OF THE FUTURE!

FOR BRONISLAW THERE WILL BE NO PEACE IN ANY AGE, EVEN IN ETERNITY!



BEHOLD THE FUTURE, MAX BRONISLAW!

I—I SEE A WORLD OF UTTER PRIMITIVENESS... NO CITIES, NO MACHINES. ALL THESE HAVE DIED. WHY, IT'S LIKE THE ANCIENT WORLD OF THE PAST!



THE FUTURE HAD COME FULL CYCLE AND MERGED WITH THE PAST. WHAT WAS LEFT OF MAN WAS BEGINNING THE LONG CLIMB TO CIVILIZATION AGAIN...

COME, THIS IS A FRESH TRACK! WE WILL SOON HAVE MEAT!

SEE, I TELL YOU, THERE IS A DEVIL IN HIM! WHY CAN HE ALWAYS FIND MEAT WHEN WE CAN'T!



IT WAS MAX'S FULLY DEVELOPED BRAIN THAT MADE HIM MORE THAN A MATCH FOR FEROCIOUS BEASTS...

WHY DIDN'T WE THINK OF THAT! ALONE, HE HAS KILLED ENOUGH MEAT FOR OUR WHOLE TRIBE!

HE MUST BE THE SON OF THE FOREST DEMON! WE MUST BE CAREFUL OR HE WILL KILL US LIKE THAT WILD BEAST!



SUSPICION HUNG ON EACH MIRACLE MAX ACCOMPLISHED, AS THE PRIMITIVE GROUP PLODDED HOME THROUGH THE SNOW STORM...

IT IS THIS WAY TO THE CAVE! I REMEMBER THOSE TREES AND MARKERS. HURRY, BEFORE WE FREEZE!

ONLY A DEMON COULD LEAD US THROUGH THIS STORM. I TOLD YOU WHEN THIS STRANGER CAME HE WAS EVIL!



ONCE IN THEIR CAVE, MAX'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR WAS WATCHED WITH OPEN HOSTILITY...

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE COLD! A FIRE WILL SOON WARM THE CAVE!

FIRE? HE SPEAKS A DIFFERENT TONGUE! WATCH WHAT HE DOES! HE STRIKES ROCKS TOGETHER. YES THE WORK OF DEMONS!



THERE IS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF! COME HERE! THE FIRE WILL WARM YOUR BONES!

NO! NO! NEVER! I TOLD YOU HE WAS A DEVIL! HE MAKES DANCING LIGHT COME OUT OF LEAVES AND WOOD! I SAY KILL!



SO LIKE MANY MEN IN ADVANCE OF THEIR PARTICULAR AGE, MAX BECAME A MARTYR...

KILL! KILL! KILL THE STRANGER! THE DEMON OF THE WOODS! KILL!

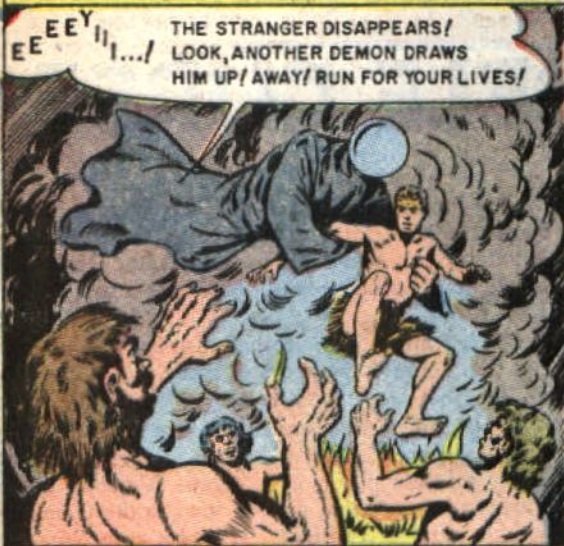


YAAAAH! YAAAAH! THE DEMON DIES! YAAAAH!

NO! NO! NATAS HELP ME! TAKE ME BACK!



THE CALL WAS ANSWERED, AND BEFORE THE BEWILDERED EYES OF THE PRIMITIVE MEN . . .



EE EY I...! THE STRANGER DISAPPEARS! LOOK, ANOTHER DEMON DRAWS HIM UP! AWAY! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

AGAIN TIME WAS BRIDGED AND MAX RETURNED TO THE WORLD OF THE PRESENT . . .



I IMPORE YOU, NATAS, RESCIND THE BARGAIN! LET ME LIVE MY OWN LIFE! I WANT NO MORE OF THE FUTURE!

TOO LATE, BRONISLAW! YOU WILLED THE AGREEMENT AND SIGNED IT IN BLOOD! I CANNOT CANCEL A LINE. LOOK UPON ME AND LEARN YOUR FATE!



Y I I I! THE CRYSTAL IS SHATTERING! WITH WHOM DID I MAKE THIS HORRIBLE BARGAIN!

YOU SHALL SOON KNOW! THE EVIL ONE HAS MANY NAMES AND MANY WAYS TO TRAP HIS VICTIMS.



NATAS! NO, NO! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT WAS SATAN, THE OVERLORD OF EVIL!

COME, THERE IS NO ESCAPE! THE BARGAIN MUST BE KEPT! A GREAT TASK AWAITS YOU, FOR ETERNITY, HA HA HA!



SAVE ME! SAVE ME! I BURN! EEEYAAA!

BRONISLAW PURCHASED HIS OWN NICHE IN HELL! LET US SEE WHAT DESTINY AWAITS HIM!



MASTER TECHNICIAN? GENIUS? YET A SIMPLE JIGSAW ELUDES HIM. MAX WILL NEVER FIT THE PIECES TOGETHER. . .

HE REJECTED HIS OWN WORLD WHICH MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT HIM HAPPINESS FOR ONE WHERE THERE IS NOTHING BUT ETERNAL AGONY AND PAIN!

THE —
— END

THE GRENOBLE CURSE

It was a long, wide marble staircase, befitting a great chateau, and though across its steps had trod many historic events, it had never until now been the direct cause of death. Now the Comte de Grenoble lay at its foot, his body bent and twisted, blood streaming from a great gash in his head. But when his young wife Denise, screaming to rouse the servants, rushed down to where she had pushed him, the last of life had not yet fled his body.

"You—you shouldn't have done it, Denise," he groaned. "I am old . . . my time would soon have come. You could have waited." His jaw sagged, and she thought he had breathed his last. But with effort he opened his eyes; his voice was a strangled whisper. "Now the curse is upon you," he said. "Now you will suffer the Grenoble Curse."

"Fool!" she spat at him. "Old two-horned fool! I'm glad I did it!"

But the Comte de Grenoble could not hear.

He was buried with ceremony in the family crypt, the young and beautiful Denise put on widow's black, and she retired to her chambers, refusing to come out, even for meals. "How hard she takes it," everybody whispered, but in her rooms the Comtesse paced back and forth restlessly. Seven days after the Comte had died, she could stand it no longer.

"Marcel," she said to the butler when he brought in her morning coffee, "distribute this money to all the servants and have everybody out by noon. I am closing the chateau today. My grief is too great here where my happiness was."

And at noon, when the door closed behind Marcel, the last to go, Denise took off her widow's weeds, dressed herself in a sprightly Jacques Fath traveling suit, and hung a colored handkerchief in her bedroom window.

The night was as dark as she'd hoped it would be, but she waited impatiently. At ten o'clock a car, its headlights dimmed, drove up the graveled drive, and Denise ran quickly downstairs and threw wide the door.

"I thought you'd never come," she said, lifting her mouth for a kiss.

"Fortunately, a dark night," the man said. "No one will see us go."

At his words, she turned her head quickly, offering only her cheek. "I hope I have not made a mistake in you," she said. She measured him coolly.

"Remy Freneau," she said, as if itemizing a bill of accounts, "gentleman, handsome as the devil . . . but destitute! And cautious as a lamb. Don't you know, you handsome idiot, there isn't a soul within half a mile?"

She led him upstairs to her chambers, pointed to the four suitcases packed and ready.

"Do you have . . . everything?" he said.

"Everything," she smiled. "Every sapphire, emerald, diamond. Every bracelet, ring, necklace. Every valuable paper, deed, stock. We shall go to Paris and every night drink a toast to the Grenoble wealth—and every night jeer at his curse."

"Curse?" said Remy, blanching.

"This is the twentieth century, idiot," Denise said. "The old goat had to have his dying joke. Now take the bags."

He bent, grasped with each hand a bag—and stopped suddenly. "What's that?" he whispered. "I thought the servants were all gone." He bit his lip. "Again. Someone laughing . . . across the hall."

"It's only our imaginations working overtime. Come, I will show you." But before she opened the door across the hall, she turned. "Remember," she whispered, "I did the deed. But your hand urged mine." And she opened the door to the Comte's chambers.

"See," she said. "Nobody here. Besides, voices in the night cannot harm us."

"Wait!" His hand fell on her arm. "I thought you took all the jewels."

"I combed every inch of this—" She stopped as her eye fell to where he pointed. A book, a heavy Morocco-bound tome, yellow with age, sat on the Comte's desk. On its cover gleamed a cluster of rubies and emeralds. "This—" she breathed, "this wasn't here an hour ago. I swear it."

His voice was harsh. "Then let's go."

"No! I killed for this! I won't let hallucinations or a magician's trickery stop me now!" she strode to the desk, tried to dislodge the jewels from the book. "They won't budge," she said; and with a frantic pull tore off the cover.

"We can put it in the suitcase, Remy. It will lie flat. Come—what . . . what is it?"

"Look," he said, and put his handkerchief to his forehead. "Read."

She stood by his side and they read together the words on the flyleaf page opposite the torn cover:

*Whoever brings harm to the Grenoble heir
Will worse than the victim finally fare.
And after he lies in his grave a week,
He'll return from the grave, vengeance to
wreak.*

*For Grenoble blood, when shed in the land,
Will not wash off the killer hand.*

"Wonderful!" Denise murmured. "More jewels—more riches!"

"What are you talking about?" Remy's voice was hoarse. "We should get out . . . The curse!" "Every old family has legends," she said, pressing his arm. "It's nothing. Seven hundred years ago, the first Comte de Grenoble befriended an itinerant sorcerer—hid him from the enraged townspeople. And he repaid with stupid doggerel. Every old family has these tales. The old goat of a Comte told me about it on our wedding day. That's nothing—but this . . .!" She pointed to the crude diagram below the curse. "Do you know what this is?" She flipped the page, scanned the lines hurriedly. "An inventory!" she breathed. "Enough jewels for a king's ransom. And the diagram—that's the vault! I have never been below—but the diagram is clear. Clear enough for a child."

But Remy stood tense. "I say we depart—now. We have enough now."

Denise's eyes were shining. "One never has enough of jewels, darling." She took his hand. "Do you know what this means, Remy? Can you conceive of such riches? All there in the vault—for us!"

"You will destroy us," Remy said. "Your greed will be our undoing!"

"Now you're being silly, Remy. And I don't like you to be silly. To plan death—and to be afraid of a sorcerer's verse, seven hundred years old. That is being very silly, Remy." She tore out the page with the diagram. "Come, we shall go down to the vault."

Muttering under his breath, Remy followed her. "Take candles, dear," she said.

He found candles, and when they reached the cellar door he lighted them, for belowstairs there was no wiring for bulbs. He held the candles high as they walked down the stone steps, their heels clanking on the ancient masonry. The stone walls were damp; the entire belowground had the fetid, musty smell of cold, sealed earth and stoneworks that have not known sunlight or clear air for ages. Remy shuddered.

"I wish we were out of here," he said.

"Soon, darling, soon. And rich as moguls."

The light flickered. The sound of Remy's heels stopped.

"Over here, dear," she said. "That grilled door

there. Yes—that's it!" She turned when there was no sound. She saw Remy standing stiffly, his head bent, peering at his palms. Her voice suddenly touched a note of clamor. "What is it?" She came back to him. "What is it, Remy?"

Relief crossed his features. "N-nothing. Only for a moment I thought—"

"Thought what, Remy?"

"The—the curse. Blood on the hand."

She smiled. "Now you see. It's all nonsense, as I said."

Again they went forward. They stopped before the grilled door. There were no keys, but it opened to their touch. Their breathing became sharp.

"There," she said. "The fourth stone block. It comes out."

She held the candles while he tugged. The stone was clammy, but loose, and when it came out the stones next above and on either side of it were dislodged also. Within the wall was a deep vault, and within the vault a metal box. He reached for it.

"Don't stop now," she said. "You can't—What is it, Remy?"

"The—the voice. I thought—"

"You're mad," she said. But her eyes were wide.

He pulled out the box and it opened and within lay a tyrant's dream. Denise uttered a moan and dipped her hands, and jewels cascaded through her fingers like multi-colored bubbles. "A continent!" she gasped. "A world—a world of jewels! Oh, Remy!"

Then suddenly, with a deep sigh, her body stiffened. There was no ignoring the sound now. A soft bemused cackle of laughter. And something that sounded like a clinking of hard metal pieces. Coins or perhaps keys.

"Remy!" It burst out of her in a shriek.

They turned toward each other, clasped hard. There could be no doubt. The chuckling was eerie in the dank gloom. And again there was the tinkling, the clinking of— Suddenly, as if on a common impulse, they rushed for the grilled door. But it would not open. It was as if a force held it on the other side. And as Denise and Remy pushed, sweating, the clinking of keys sounded again—and then the harsh, grating sound as of a lock being turned. Remy banged furiously at the grill and after a while he began to yell. But Denise said tonelessly, "Not a soul within half a mile!"

And they looked at each other, and at the door through which they could not pass, and, in the waning light of the candles, their eyes turned simultaneously to their hands, on which a bright red stain was slowing beginning to spread . . .

THRUST of a GHOST LANCE

INHUMAN FIEND, WHY HAVE YOU DESTROYED MY GREAT ARMS COLLECTION? WHO ARE YOU WHO DARES TEST THE POWERS OF THE HOUSE OF TURINO?

I AM DUKE MALVO, UNCLE TO THIS ROTTEN LINE, WHICH IN DEATH I VOWED TO DESTROY! THE GRAVE CANNOT HOLD ME UNTIL THE LAST TURINO'S BLOOD IS SPILLED!

IT WAS RIGHT AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR WHEN THE FIRST DIRE EVENTS OCCURRED WHICH ROCKED THE HOUSE OF TURINO...

DOWN WITH THE TURINOS, THE BLOOD SUCKERS! THE ROTTEN PROFITEERS! PAY FOR OUR INJURIES, YOU SABOTEURS! TRAITORS!



THE ENRAGED EX-SOLDIERS, MAIMED BY FAULTY TURINO WEAPONS, HAD COME SEEKING INDEMNITIES, BUT INSTEAD, RECEIVED...

THERE'S THAT DEVIL HIMSELF, COUNT LUIGI! HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR INJURIES! TEAR HIM APART!

BACK, YOU SWINE! DRIVE THEM OUT OF THE VILLA, GUARDS! SHOOT TO KILL IF NECESSARY!



FOR SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS THE ARMORERS OF THE HOUSE OF TURINO HAD PROSPERED WHILE EUROPE BLEED. DOWN THE CENTURIES EACH TURINO WAS, LIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, UNSCRUPULOUS, SELLING DEFECTIVE WEAPONS EVEN TO HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN. CURSED BY MILLIONS, THE TURINOS LIVED ON, GORGED WITH WEALTH, NO CRACK APPEARING IN THE MIGHTY FORTRESS THEY HAD BUILT... UNTIL COUNT LUIGI, THE COLLECTOR, REIGNED. THEN FATE ENTERED TO UNLOCK A CENTURIES' OLD CURSE WHICH RIPPED FROM AN UNTIMELY GRAVE... THE KNIGHT IN ROTTED ARMOR.

WHEN THE MOB HAD BEEN DRIVEN OFF. . .



FATHER, IS IT TRUE? WERE THESE WEAPONS WE MADE REALLY FAULTY?

IT COULD NOT BE HELPED! THE MATERIALS WERE BAD! BUT IT WAS

WAR! A FEW MORE OR LESS KILLED DON'T MATTER! WHAT DOES MATTER IS THE GREAT HOUSE OF TURINO! AND YOU, MY SON, SHALL SOME DAY BE IT'S MASTER!

NO MORTAL KNOWS THE FUTURE! MAN MAKES BUT KNOWS NOT HIS FATE!

BUT FATHER, DON'T YOU HAVE PITY FOR THOSE PEOPLE? HOW CAN THEY WORK AND SUPPORT A FAMILY?

THAT IS NOT OUR CONCERN! FORGET IT! LOOK INSTEAD UPON MY GREAT ARMS COLLECTION, THE FINEST IN THE WORLD!

WHAT—NO HEART, COUNT? SOON IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR REGRETS!



BUT NELLO COULD NOT FORGET AND IN ANGRY OUTBURST...

I AM NOT INTERESTED IN THIS STUPID COLLECTION! I AM ASHAMED THAT MY NAME IS TURINO! I WILL NOT SUCCEED YOU!

NELLO, MY SON, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? DO YOU WANT TO KILL ME? OH, MY HEART! I FEEL A STROKE COMING ON!



THE FAKED HEART ATTACK HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT...

I—I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU! NO, FORGET WHAT I SAID! I WILL NOT DESERT YOU, EVER!

MY SON... I HAVEN'T LONG TO LIVE! YOU MUST BECOME MASTER OF TURINO! NOW TAKE ME TO THE CASTLE! IT WILL EASE THE PAIN TO SEE HOW THE CONSTRUCTION WORK IS GOING ON!



WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT THAT THE CASTLE BE REBUILT? NO ONE WILL EVER LIVE IN THAT ROCK PILE!

IT IS A SYMBOL OF OUR GREATNESS! IN IT THE FIRST ARMOR MADE BY A TURINO WAS FORGED! BUT LOOK HOW SLOWLY THE WORK HAS PROGRESSED... I SHALL HAVE TO SPEAK TO THE FOREMAN!



IN THREE WEEKS YOU HAVE MADE NO PROGRESS! IT'S AN OUTRAGE! YOU ARE ROBBING ME!

THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE HERE! WALLS COLLAPSE AND FLOORS GIVE WAY AS IF SOMETHING ROTTEN WERE BENEATH THE VERY FOUNDATION!



BACK! THE WALLS ARE FALLING!

AAAII! THERE ARE THREE WORKMEN INSIDE! THEY'LL BE CRUSHED TO DEATH! THE DEVIL HIMSELF MUST BE IN THAT CASTLE!



As the dust settled, Count Luigi stood transfixed, for he alone saw the vision...

STOP TRYING TO REBUILD THE CASTLE! IT WILL NEVER STAND! IT WILL NEVER STAND! IT ROTS AT THE FOUNDATION, JUST LIKE THE HOUSE OF TURINO FOR THE CRIMES IT HAS COMMITTED!

AAAH! WHAT DOES IT MEAN—THAT HORRIBLE SPECTRE'S WARNING? NELLO, NELLO, COME BACK! MY HEART!

IT IS YOUR OWN ACTS COMING BACK TO PLAGUE YOU!

While the count lay in a coma...

I KNOW THAT ARTURO WAS WORKING DOWN HERE! WE MUST CLEAR THIS WHOLE DUNGEON, CARLO!

LOOK WHAT WE DUG UP! THE COUNT WILL PAY A NICE BONUS FOR THAT SUIT OF ARMOR!

As the rubble was cleared away...

AAAAH, MY BONES ARE WEARY FROM LYING HERE ALL THOSE CENTURIES! WHERE IS THE COUNT! BRING HIM HERE AT ONCE!

EEEE! BY MY SOUL, THE IRON MAN MOVES! HE SPEAKS! CARLO RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

By this time, the count had recovered sufficiently to sneer at the wild story...

I SWEAR BY MY NAME THE IRON MAN MOVED AND SPOKE!

BAH, YOU ARE LIKE OLD WOMEN! SEE, THERE HE LIES! WONDERFUL! WONDERFUL! A FIND FOR MY MUSEUM!

AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FRESH BLOOD ON HIS CHEST, YOUR EXCELLENCY?

UMMM...! IT IS SIMPLE! ONE OF YOU MUST HAVE CUT HIMSELF! THERE IS NO OTHER REASON. THIS SUIT OF ARMOR IS SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS OLD! LOAD IT INTO MY CAR AND TAKE IT TO THE MUSEUM!

In the museum workshop several hours later, when the armor was unfastened...

I SHOULD SAY, YOUR EXCELLENCY, THAT THIS IS THE VERY EARLIEST ARMOR MADE BY YOUR ANCESTORS. A RARE FIND! WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE BONY ONE?

BURY HIM IN OUR OWN CEMETERY. HE MAY BE ONE OF MY OWN ANCESTORS! AND I WANT THAT SUIT OF ARMOR CLEANED, POLISHED AND PLACED IN THE MUSEUM TOMORROW!

THE FOLLOWING DAY WHEN THE COUNT MADE HIS INSPECTION TOUR...

AAH, THERE IT IS! THEY WORKED ALL NIGHT TO PUT IT IN SHAPE...! MY EYES ARE WEAK—I MUST GET CLOSER!



BRUNO, EZIO... MAY YOUR SOULS ROT! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE HERE? WHAT KIND OF JOKE IS THIS?

WHAT IS WRONG, COUNT LUIGI?



THE DEVIL MUST BE IN THAT ARMOR! WE SWEAR WE SPENT TEN HOURS SCRAPING AND POLISHING! IT SHONE LIKE A MIRROR!

OUT, OUT! LIARS! SCOUNDRELS! YOU ARE FINISHED HERE! IF YOU SHOW YOUR FACES AT VILLA TURINO, I'LL HAVE YOUR BONES BROKEN!



SUDDENLY, AS THE COUNT HALTED HIS PURSUIT OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM...

NOW WHAT? IT SOUNDS LIKE A BATTLE IS TAKING PLACE IN THE MUSEUM! IF THOSE WRETCHES HAVE COMMITTED MORE SABOTAGE, I'LL—



BRANG!

KRAASH!

KRAASH!

AND RUNNING INSIDE...

BY ALL THE SAINTS... MY MUSEUM IS BEING DESTROYED, BY THAT— THAT CURSED SUIT OF ARMOR! HALT, ENOUGH! FIEND OR DEVIL, WHO ARE YOU!



KLAANNNG

I AM DUKE MALVO, THE UNCLE OF THE FIRST TURINO ARMORER... THE FIRST OF THE WHOLE MURDEROUS LINE, OF WHICH YOU SHALL BE THE LAST! DO YOU KNOW HOW IN THE DIM PAST YOUR BLOODY ANCESTOR SEIZED MY INHERITANCE? LISTEN!



IT WAS THE EVE OF ST. CECILIA'S DAY, TWELVE HUNDRED AND FORTY SIX. MY NEPHEW LORENZO WAS FINISHING MY SUIT OF ARMOR FOR THE TOURNAMENT...

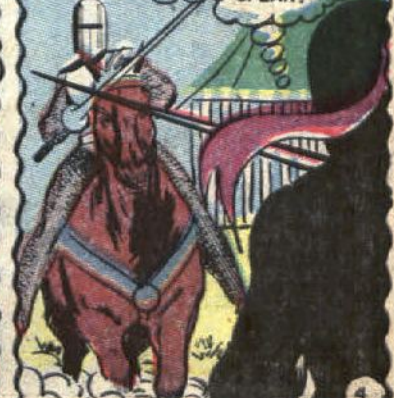
LORENZO, MY NEPHEW, WILL THE ARMOR WITHSTAND THE THRUST OF A SPEAR? TO-MORROW I FIGHT FOR MY LIFE IN A TOURNAMENT!

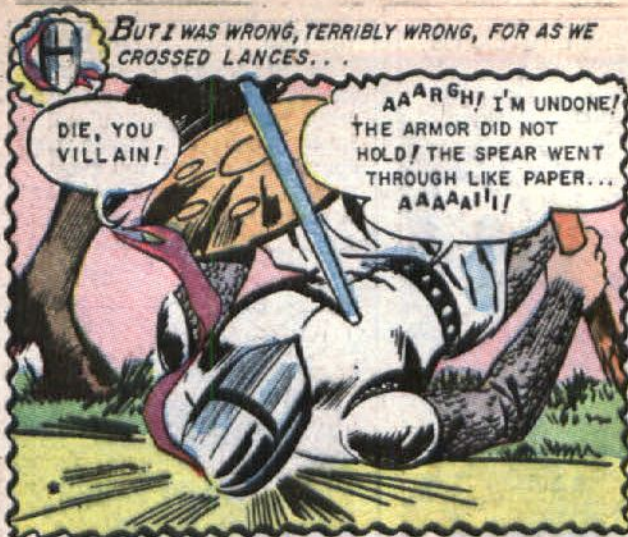
NOTHING CAN PIERCE THIS ARMOR, SIRE! YOU SHALL BE INVINCIBLE, MY UNCLE!



I WAS FIRST IN THE LISTS. MY OPPONENT WAS A DEADLY ENEMY FROM LOMBARDY...

I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR! MY ARMOR WILL TURN AWAY EVERY THRUST OF HIS SPEAR!





BUT I WAS WRONG, TERRIBLY WRONG, FOR AS WE CROSSED LANCES...

DIE, YOU VILLAIN!

AAARGH! I'M UNDONE!
THE ARMOR DID NOT
HOLD! THE SPEAR WENT
THROUGH LIKE PAPER...
AAAAAII!



AND AS I LAY DYING IN MY TENT...

YES, UNCLE,
I TRICKED YOU!
I MADE YOU A SUIT OF
HALF ROTTED ARMOR!
I WANTED YOU TO DIE!
NOW THE ESTATE, THE
CASTLE, ALL YOUR
LANDS WILL BELONG
TO ME! HA HA HA!

HEAVEN CURSE
YOU AND ALL
YOUR KIND,
LORENZO! YOU
SHALL NOT ESCAPE
ME, EVEN IF I MUST
RETURN FROM THE
GRAVE TO REVENGE
MYSELF!



AND SO I HAVE RETURNED, FOR
NONE OF THE TURINOS DOWN
THROUGH THE CENTURIES HAVE
MENDED THEIR WAYS. ALL ARE
ROTTEN TO THE CORE!

IT WAS IN
YOUR POWER
TO SAVE
YOURSELF!
YOUR ACTS HAVE
CONDEMNED
YOU!

HELP! HELP!
SAVE ME!



GATHERING ALL HIS HIRELINGS, THE COUNT RETURNED TO THE MUSEUM...

BUT, YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE
STORY YOU TELL IS
IMPOSSIBLE!

QUIET, YOU WILL
SOON SEE FOR YOUR-
SELF! EVERY MAN ON
GUARD!



BUT NO FORCE WAS NECESSARY...

IT'S INCREDIBLE! WE BURIED THE
REMAINS OF THE STRANGE KNIGHT
AND HE RETURNED TO HIS SUIT OF
ARMOR! BUT HOW CAN A DEAD
MAN...? MY MIND
CANNOT FATHOM
IT!

I SAW THE
FIEND WITH MY
OWN EYES! I WANT HIM
BURIED, ARMOR AND
ALL, IN A TEN-FOOT
SLAB OF CONCRETE...
AT ONCE!



WHEN THE COUNT'S ORDERS WERE FULFILLED...

ONLY SATAN
COULD BRING
HIM BACK
NOW!

NOW I FEEL
SAFE! I CAN START
PREPARING FOR THE
GREAT SEVEN HUN-
DREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF
OUR HOUSE, I HAVE A
WONDERFUL TREAT
PLANNED FOR OUR
GUESTS!



ON THE DAY OF THE GREAT CELEBRATION...

SO THIS IS WHY
YOU SENT ME TO
ROME FOR TWO
WEEKS! YOU'VE
TURNED THE
CLOCK BACK
SEVEN HUNDRED
YEARS! WHAT
A SPECTACLE!

YES, AND I'M
STAGING A
TOURNAMENT ON
THIS VERY FIELD,
JUST LIKE THEY
DID IN MY
ANCESTORS'
TIMES! YOU,
NELLO, WILL
WEAR THE COLORS
OF THE HOUSE
OF TURINO!



I'LL HAVE NO PART OF THIS SILLY GAME! WHY SHOULD I HONOR A LOT OF CUTTHROAT ANCESTORS? NO, I'LL NOT DO IT!

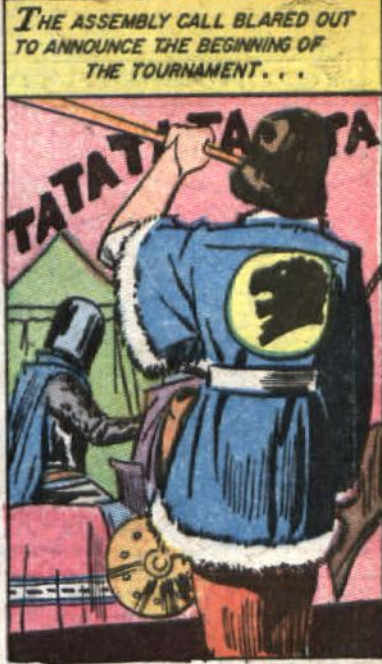
NELLO, WHEN YOU SPEAK LIKE THAT IT HURTS ME... I FEEL FAINT! OOOH, MY HEART!



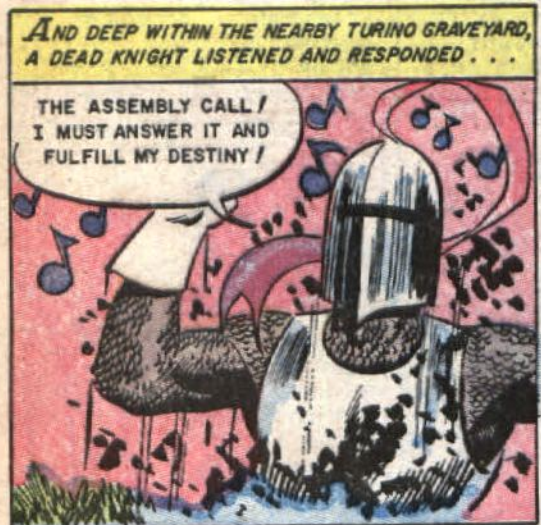
FRIGHTENED BY HIS FATHER'S SHAM ATTACK, NELLO RELENTED...

YES, YES, I KNOW THERE'S NO DANGER! THE SPEARS ARE PADDED! BUT THE WHOLE THING IS STUPID! I DO IT ONLY TO MAKE YOU HAPPY!

HURRY, NELLO! THE TRUMPET WILL SOON BE SOUNDED!



THE ASSEMBLY CALL BLARED OUT TO ANNOUNCE THE BEGINNING OF THE TOURNAMENT...



AND DEEP WITHIN THE NEARBY TURINO GRAVEYARD, A DEAD KNIGHT LISTENED AND RESPONDED...

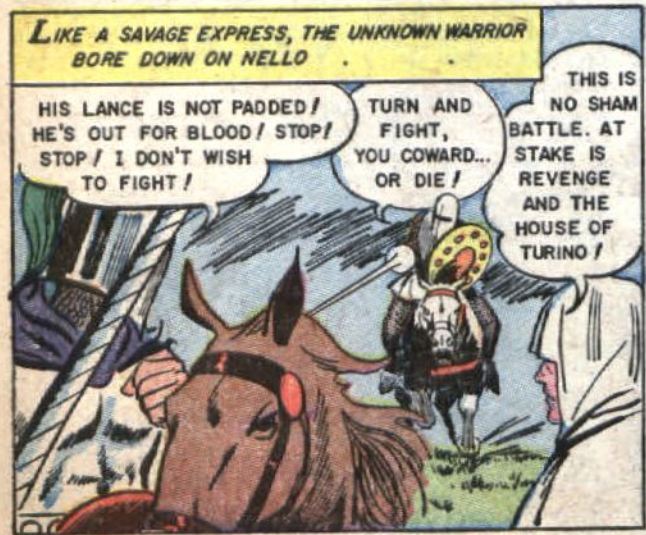
THE ASSEMBLY CALL! I MUST ANSWER IT AND FULFILL MY DESTINY!



THE TOURNAMENT WENT ON. NELLO SCORED A VICTORY AND WAS JUST LEAVING THE FIELD, WHEN...

BRAVO, NELLO! YOU ARE A REAL KNIGHT, WORTHY OF THE TURINO NAME!

COUNT LUIGI, LOOK! THE FAR END OF THE FIELD! A STRANGE KNIGHT IS GALLOPING THIS WAY! HE'S NOT IN THE LISTS!

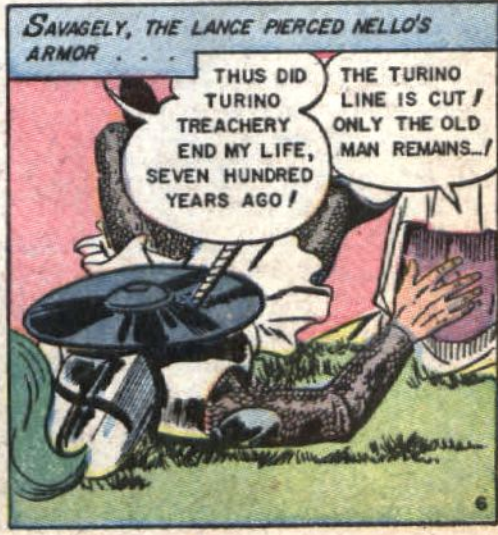


LIKE A SAVAGE EXPRESS, THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR BORE DOWN ON NELLO

HIS LANCE IS NOT PADDED! HE'S OUT FOR BLOOD! STOP! STOP! I DON'T WISH TO FIGHT!

TURN AND FIGHT, YOU COWARD... OR DIE!

THIS IS NO SHAM BATTLE. AT STAKE IS REVENGE AND THE HOUSE OF TURINO!



SAVAGELY, THE LANCE PIERCED NELLO'S ARMOR...

THUS DID TURINO TREACHERY END MY LIFE, SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO!

THE TURINO LINE IS CUT! ONLY THE OLD MAN REMAINS...!

THE OLD COUNT HURRIED TO THE LAD'S SIDE.

NELLO/ NELLO/ MY SON! SPEAK TO ME!

HE'S DEAD, YOUR EXCELLENCY! THE SPEAR PIERCED HIS HEART!



AT THE FAR END OF THE FIELD, THE STRANGE KNIGHT QUIETLY SUBMITTED TO CAPTURE...

PULL THE MURDERER DOWN! TAKE HIS HELMET OFF!

LET ME THROUGH! THIS OLD HAND WILL REVENGE MY SON! I'LL HACK THE DOG TO BITS!

MAKE WAY FOR THE COUNT!



THE HELMET'S RUSTED WITH AGE... HARD TO REMOVE!

B-BUT THE KNIGHT WHO KILLED MY SON... HIS ARMOR GLEAMED??? QUICKLY, OFF WITH HIS HELMET! I MUST KNOW!



BY ALL THE SAINTS! A CORPSE IN ARMOR! LOOK, THE COUNT FALLS!

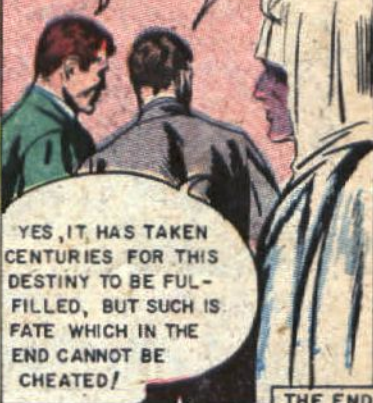
DUKE MALVO...! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN! FIRST, MY SON... AND NOW AAAAH!—MY HEART!



AND THIS TIME IT WAS NO SHAM ATTACK...

BEFORE HE FELL, HE MENTIONED DUKE MALVO, ONE OF HIS ANCESTORS!

BUT THE DUKE DIED SEVEN CENTURIES AGO! HOW STRANGE! WE'LL NEVER KNOW.



YES, IT HAS TAKEN CENTURIES FOR THIS DESTINY TO BE FULFILLED, BUT SUCH IS FATE WHICH IN THE END CANNOT BE CHEATED!

THE END

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF

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A. A. WYN

(Signature of editor, publisher, business manager or owner)

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